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Chapter Twenty-four: Ameretat I

Year 1991, the end of the Cold War.

December 25th, at 19:32. From the roof of the Hotel National, facing Red Square, a lone man wrapped in a thick fur coat gazed into the distance. Through the binoculars held before his eyes, he watched the flag of the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics being lowered for the very last time. He lowered the binoculars and set them aside, then took the cigarette from between his lips and let it fall before him, crushing it beneath his boot. His face unreadable and his intentions uncertain; his green eyes shone, ready to seize a dawning opportunity.

From the travel bag at his side, he took out a mobile phone and switched it on. He dialed by memory the only number that would ever be used on that phone, pressed the call button, and brought it to his ear.

"Is everything ready?."

"Everything."

At the answer from the other end, he looked up at the night sky.

"There will be no turning back after taking the first step."

"I know. We know."

"Are you not afraid?."

"Are you?."

"Yes, a little."

"Then it is the right path."

He smiled to himself and closed his eyes, denying himself the sight of the shooting star that flew overhead.

"... let's begin."

. . .

That day, Amere was born, or so I was told. Ameretat is the group's full name, and it comes from the name of a deity in an ancient Persian religion. Its founders were Kuzma Panov and Redrick Bahramian, though those were only the names that became known; it is an open secret that the original group was much larger. At least twenty people gathered in the days leading up to the fall of the USSR, no less than in Moscow, near the Kremlin.

Scientists, philosophers, politicians, soldiers, doctors, or writers. The only thing clear is that this gathering of intellectuals devised the foundations of what would become the Ameretat movement. The origin of the name is... a little more understandable when you know the story.

Redrick Bahramian was a Russian man, with a Russian mother and an Iranian father, born in Volgograd. Little is known about his life before that day in Moscow when he gave the order to begin Amere's operations. He was a KGB member in his early forties at the time, a man who had forged within himself a very simple creed: everything is wrong. He did not like the Western world, nor the Eastern one; he did not like believers, nor atheists; he looked on capitalists with disgust, as he did communists. In his eyes, everything was shit, and everyone was wrong. Yet he himself was not some enlightened man whose ideas could create a perfect world; no, he did not even have a political doctrine to follow. He did not believe in such things. Redrick thought... that the

real foundation, the true point of departure, the origin of a perfect civilization, could only be born at the hands of the original human being. He said people had been corrupted by ideals and religious beliefs, and that only by destroying the current world could the on that would raise men to God's height be born from its ashes.

A curious word, since he himself was not a devout believer. Even so, in memory of his origins and his own father's beliefs, he decided to name his organization after a deity from his father's faith.

According to those who claim to have known him, Redrick's life was steeped in secrecy, and even the person he claimed to be before forming Ameretat is doubted. The names of his parents are unknown, as is that of his wife, and

only one name is known among the several children he is rumored to have had: Viktor, the Ahri.

Kuzma Panov was different; transparent as crystal. Almost everything about him is

known, since he never tried to hide anything. He entered the Ioffe Physical-Technical Institute in Saint Petersburg at a very young age where, if I recall correctly, he specialized in astrophysics. Though it is unknown how he and Bahramian met, it is known that they became friends, almost brothers, many years before the fall of the Soviet Union. According to Kuzma, Redrick was an extremely convincing man, with an impeccable bearing and a unique presence; he found himself bound to his cause the moment he heard him speak.

Kuzma was not just another cog in the machine; he was a central figure during the formation of Amere. He was respected and admired in equal measure by those who would become his students, and that alone would allow him to create a network of influence that, in just a few years, would spread across nearly the entire Soviet state. He carefully analyzed his students and colleagues, with impeccable precision discerning who might become potential adherents to his cause; to Redrick's cause. He knew where to look. Young humanists

who found no comfort in state propaganda, parents who lost their children in the Afghan war, and former soldiers who had spent time in the gulag after the Second World War, but also prostitutes, workers, and drunkards in bars. No one who could truly, in the deepest part of their soul, be convinced that the only way to fix this world was to destroy it would be discarded. Neither Kuzma nor Redrick sought the strongest, the smartest, or the richest; they sought the most loyal, the one who would be willing to give their life for the cause. And so, Ameretat grew...

By the mid-1980s, there was already at least one Ameretat agent in every Russian university, serving as a proxy between potential new members and Kuzma, who would ultimately decide who would be chosen to join the group. Though this is a little hard for me to believe, it is said that man never made a mistake; that there was never a single Amere who regretted joining, and that the organization was never discovered. New members received

financial help, enough to survive, and all kinds of support. That may have been somewhat difficult to achieve in the beginning, but it would have been eased by the admission of men and women from every social stratum and profession. As for the obligations members had, that is not clear to me. I imagine they would perform reconnaissance and information-gathering tasks, each from their little corner of the world. Moreover, no one was allowed to speak of Ameretat, not even to recruit new members; all they could do was pass Kuzma the identity of any candidate, and he would personally conduct the relevant investigation.

The second half of that decade marked Ameretat's first explosion of growth. The reduction of censorship and state persecution was the push many voices needed to rise, to express their discontent and hopelessness. For Kuzma, this was nothing less than a road opening before him. From writers and artists returning to the country from exile to politicians and soldiers watching, grain by grain, the

might of the Soviet Union crumble. I do not know the specific examples, but I do know that many of the most important names in the organization joined during those short five years, along with hundreds and hundreds of people who, though less relevant, were no less committed. It was then that Kuzma decided to appoint, for the first time since the creation of Amere, the members of the Greater Table. These people, who as I already mentioned were around twenty, would heed Kuzma's direct orders and be responsible for relaying them to every link in the chain. They were also the ones privileged enough to meet Redrick.

It was no small surprise for these high-ranking members when they entered that room in the Hotel National and saw that it was not Kuzma sitting at the head of the long table, but rather a tan-skinned man with dark hair and green eyes, a wrinkleless face and a calmer than exhausted expression, and a curious cross-shaped birthmark on the right side of his neck; Redrick Bahramian. Behind him,

standing, was the unmistakable Kuzma Panov, with his usual appearance as a serious yet kind man of integrity, with his knitted vest, rectangular glasses, and neatly combed hair.

Only one phrase survives from that first meeting:

"This man here is Redrick Bahramian. He is Ameretat."

It was no secret, neither to Redrick nor to anyone who knew Panov well, the enormous admiration and even devotion he felt for Amere's leader. To Kuzma Panov, Redrick was nothing less than the messiah who had come to make humanity understand how far it had strayed from the path, from that path no one knew, but there it was. Bahramian's word was for him almost sacred and had to be followed to the letter, even if the relationship between them was never that of a god and his servant, but rather that of inseparable colleagues. It sounds a little contradictory,

but I can only believe what apparently Kuzma himself once said to those closest to him.

How long did it take that select group of members to spread their influence to every corner, every street, every shadow of the nation? Not much more than a year after that first meeting. Like advanced-stage cancer, Amere spread across the country at a dizzying pace, and soon reached the highest government echelons and, though to a much lesser extent, neighboring countries.

However, and although its singular premise might suggest otherwise, Ameretat differed greatly from any ordinary cult. Its members were not brainwashed sick people, incapable of thinking for themselves. No, far from it. The Amere were people fully aware, absolutely rational when it came to their desire for a better world. Their mental processes genuinely led them to conclude that this was the only viable path, and on that basis they acted. It is... terrifying. Only then can one understand the damage

they ultimately caused. The Ameres, especially the prominent members, were methodical and calculating people who knew how to make full use of any situation or event that could plant in a man's chest the seed of discontent. There were notable members involved in the promulgation of Glasnost, as there were during the Chernobyl incident. It was an Amere member who was the chief promoter of the riots in Alma-Ata, and it was also several Amere who were the first to engage in private business in the territory of the Union once it was allowed. Everywhere, in every situation, there was at least one Amere. Every event was an opportunity to attract new members. It almost seems mythological that they managed to remain anonymous for so many decades with such aggressive recruitment techniques. Kuzma's merit, I suppose.

So we return to the beginning of this chapter. That very day marked the beginning of Amere's belligerent activities. Belligerent, of course, if understood as the preparation for what would one day

become their armed uprising. It is said Redrick became much more active from then on, not only taking part in recruitment activities, but also using his broad circle of influence to acquire thousands and thousands of pieces of weaponry from all over the world. He strongly believed in his own gift for persuasion, and insisted that any army from any nation could be easily defeated if enough screws were loosened. Looking back, he was not so wrong.

The following years of the group were very fruitful. Thousands and thousands of new members, tons of military material acquired and safeguarded with the utmost care. Ameretat's network would have been, had it not been an absolute secret carefully kept, the envy of any other clandestine organization. Through Kuzma it is known that Redrick often looked out the window from that same room in the Hotel National, smiling to himself, deciding when the opportune moment to strike would be. Even with the brotherly relationship between them, Redrick never

revealed to Kuzma who exactly those important contacts in the government were that allowed him to approach and recruit with relative ease among the highest social strata; in his own words, it was for the safety of the entire group.

Almost thirty years passed until an already elderly Redrick decided the time to act had come. It is unknown whether it was global political instability or the growing fear of nuclear war, but something convinced him that the second phase of his plan had finally to be set in motion, around the year 2019. If you ask me, I will tell you the answer is much simpler and more human: Redrick did not have much time left to live. Someone with aspirations and dreams so magnificent must surely have been a very proud man, and would not want to die before seeing his dream manifest in reality.

Redrick Bahramian died of natural causes in the year 2023. He was unable to see the world he longed for, but he did see the foundations of society give way before Ameretat's power; before his power. He

left no direct successor, though that does not make Amere a leaderless organization. Power passed into the hands of... something like a council of regional leaders. One for each continent or region of importance. I only know Viktor, who is the leader of the region concerning Western Europe. I know there are specific leaders for Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the east and west of Russia, China, East Asia, the United States, Canada, Mexico and Central America, northern South America, southern South America, and surely several more assigned to vital areas or countries of great importance.

Kuzma is still alive, and in good health... at least that was the last I heard of him. The regional leaders begged him to take command after Redrick's death, but he refused. For him, Redrick himself was Ameretat, so no one could take his place as the supreme head of the organization. Instead, he took on the role of being one more voice in the discussion whenever the leaders meet. I... was able to see him a few

times. Given how much he adored his father, it is no surprise that he showed special interest in Viktor, and the latter referred to old Kuzma as one more member of his family. I even greeted him and shook his hand. I spoke with him, he asked about my life... Kuzma... I hate to say it, but he is not a bad man. But that is not what I want to talk about.

This was only a brief introduction to what Amere is and what it represents.

It is stupid, it is childish. It is nonsense, and above all it goes against the most basic common sense.

So I ask myself... how? How could this happen? How could it go so far? I do not plan to write an essay about why I think the very mass that gives shape to Amere is an anomaly with no reason to exist, but... but I do not understand it.

Maybe someone out there can find the reason, but I cannot.

But, look through the window. Entire countries reduced to memories... and all

for one man's desire.

Was this what Redrick Bahramian wanted?

December, 2024

"Alez, finally. Did they give you your things?"

"Almost all of them..."

I said, checking my 92, which did not have a single extra scratch compared to how it looked when they had taken it from me.

"Where is my rifle?"

"Rifle?"

"A CZ-805. It was the one I used when they captured me."

"Hm... you did not have a rifle when they brought you to the cell. The boys must have kept it."

"Which boys?"

"The same ones who captured you, obviously. Forget about the weapon, I will get you another. We are not going to take inventory among the thousands of members in the area to find a rifle. We do not have time either, we leave in three hours."

I did not object. I did not have any particular fondness for that rifle either. It would have been different if they had taken my pistol.

"They are preparing the helicopter on the roof. We will leave here, make a stop in Novo Mesto to refuel and handle a few matters, and then head for Grenoble. We will also need to make another stop to refuel, but that one will be quick."

I was not all that interested in what I was hearing, so I kept focusing on making sure my preferred weapon was in perfect condition. Once satisfied, I tucked it away beneath my clothes and looked out the

window while Viktor spoke.

I was in a classroom like any other, its interior altered to serve as a dormitory. The four members of the Ahri's personal guard (Laurent, Rico, Flavio, and I) shared it, which had created a somewhat uncomfortable atmosphere the night before. Sleeping beside my torturers was... I could barely sleep. It was around nine in the morning and sunny. In the Ahri's words, a beautiful day to fly.

"How are your wounds?"

"They are no big deal."

"Do they hurt?"

I heard one of the beds creak and turned to find him sitting on the one opposite mine.

"What are we going to France for?"

"Do you care?"

"Is there anything left in France?"

"Not much, some cities and towns.

Informants from several communes reported there has been a lot of movement lately. Entire caravans of vehicles with armed people inside, some aircraft, closed roads... and it is not our doing, so I have an idea of what is happening."

"Stateless."

"Of course not. They do not have the cohesion to orchestrate things that big. Stateless are little more than better-armed looters."

"Then?"

"A resistance."

"How?"

I watched him search the pocket of his jacket and pull out two honey candies. He offered me one, but I refused, so he put both in his mouth before continuing.

"Life finding a way. Survivors from different areas traveling from one side to the other, joining together, forming alliances... I suppose they have had enough

time to form an organized group without us noticing."

"It is hard to think something like that could have happened without Amere noticing."

"We do not have as large a network as you might think. If we take a city, destroy it, and then leave, nothing remains behind to take care of the survivors. We only have the communes, and they are easy to avoid if you are careful."

"What will you do?"

"What will 'we' do, you mean."

"..."

"I will go back to France and crush that resistance. It is going to take time, though I hope not too much. A resistance, as if I did not already have enough problems... Amere is not going to stop expanding because of this, but it will surely slow our advance."

"What do you know about them?"

"Almost nothing. That is why we stop in Novo Mesto. I have to speak with some

people who have information, and others who will give me advice on how to proceed. I will also have to leave the more distant places under someone else's charge. Damn it, I still have not decided who. But..."

He stretched out on the bed and, in one motion, stood up.

"It is not something you need to worry your little head about."

"My weapon..."

"Yes, I will find you something when I have time. It can wait until Grenoble. Trust me, you will not need to fire a shot until we get there."

"But..."

"No buts. I want you on the roof in two hours."

As if the superficial warmth he had shown before had never existed, he left the room without sparing me even a glance. I

looked out the window, and there was nothing interesting on the other side.

. . .

I had once seen a UH-60 in flight, back when I was in the army, but I had never had the chance to board one. I had not even stood this close to one with all three engines roaring like that time. It is no exaggeration to say that, had I not held a firm stance, the wind whipped up by the spinning blades alone could have knocked me flat onto the ground. I found it almost amusing that the Ahri, being noticeably smaller than me, seemed unaffected by it. He walked beneath that massive rotor with complete ease, approaching the aircraft at a calm pace. I would not have heard him even if he had shouted, so he simply gestured with his hand that it was time to get on board. When the sliding door shut behind me, I found myself inside a cabin that seemed to have been... at least slightly modified to the Ahri's preference. The layout was efficient, with only six seats. I took one and glanced around. Rico,

Laurent, Flavio, and the Ahri were there —no one else. None of them paid me much attention, until Rico motioned for me to buckle up. Even inside the helicopter, the noise was deafening. At his insistence, I grabbed the headset near my seat and put it on.

"Can you hear me?"

I nodded at Rico, who clicked his tongue.

"Use your words, idiot."

I took the microphone and brought it closer to my mouth.

"I hear you."

"Good. First time in a helicopter?"

"No. But..."

"You must be used to flying like cattle."

It was the Ahri who cut in, without

taking his eyes off the window beside him.

"This helicopter is mine. You will be flying in it more often than you think. Get used to it."

He said a few more things, though they were not directed at me, but at the pilots. I stayed quiet. Leaning back against the frame of the helicopter, I... looked out the window again as it lifted off.

. . .

It is pointless to talk about the stop in Novo Mesto. Right now, at least. I spent almost all that time standing beside the helicopter anyway. Waiting for the Ahri to return. After that, the meeting with Kuzma... but I will detail that later, perhaps.

I want to focus more on what happened when we arrived in Grenoble.

The sight that presented itself to me when I stepped down from the UH-60

was nothing short of Dantesque.

We landed directly at the city's airport. Not because it was the most suitable place logistically speaking, but because the whole site was now some sort of central Ameretat base in the region. It was the first time I had seen anything like it. Attack aircraft, artillery pieces, training troops, it was, by all appearances, a military base.

Stunned, standing there while the blades ceased spinning above me, watching the spectacle around me, I did not see the Ahri pass by my side, nor the rest of the guard disembarking. Only Flavio's pat on the back brought me to my senses.

"Alez."

I turned to look at him like someone running into an acquaintance on the street.

"Do not lag behind. We are not waiting for you."

There was no animosity in his voice, only a particular coldness; he was merely stating a fact, without making any value judgment. He already saw me as one more member of the team, and he did not want the Ahri to have to turn around and call me over. It was a mechanical gesture, a necessary gesture. I do not know whether I felt relieved at being seen as just another man, or terrified by that same fact.

I understood that for the Ahri, traveling by helicopter was not much different from taking a taxi. He had us enter a particular room inside the airport. In earlier times it would have served as the office of some travel agency, but at that moment it was a meeting room specially prepared for the Ahri's visit. We entered, still carrying our backpacks and suitcases, and found several members of the organization of presumably high rank although, judging by their reactions, none of them came close to my new boss.

"I want the short version, I have not

eaten anything yet."

He said, sitting at the head of the long table in the center of the room. I followed Flavio's example and stayed standing nearby, looking around. There was nothing hanging on the walls, but there were many nails that I suppose had previously held images related to the aforementioned travel agency. I thought that if they had not bothered to remove them, it was because the room had been hastily repurposed. Then some furniture, also empty, and at the far end of the table, a projector displaying a map of France on a whiteboard. There were several unknown men on that same side, but only one stood out. A frail, aged-looking one, with a scar running from the right side of his chin to his neck and almost white eyes. He wore a military uniform without insignia... which struck me as strange, ridiculous, and unnecessary. He greeted the Ahri... and then looked at me.

"Sir, that..."

"New member."

"Ours?"

"Mine."

"Then..."

"Personal guard, nothing that concerns you. Can we continue?"

"... yes, sir."

He took his eyes off me, but not before reading me with them.

That gratuitous distrust gave me a certain sense of calm; at least I was not among idiots who accepted everything their leader told them. There was doubt, and doubt was always the cradle of true understanding.

...

Where did I hear those words...?

"I know you have already been informed, in broad terms, of the situation, so I will be brief. What initially were only minor

riots became a formal uprising."

"Where?"

"Across the entire region. We have received reports throughout French territory speaking of the rapid growth of a nationalist resistance. These are not twenty or thirty lunatics seeking freedom, but hundreds or thousands of individuals organizing to take control of the country back. I fear... that although it sounds barbaric to put it in these terms, it is the only way I can express it. The cities were left with too many civilians still capable of fighting. They want to put up a fight."

"Did this not happen in Portugal as well? It should be easy to solve."

"This is not like Portugal or western Austria, sir."

My arms, crossed over my chest, tensed against my will. Flavio's gaze settled on me, and I did my best to remain expressionless.

"We know the resistance has been

communicating from one end of the territory to the other using VHF equipment."

"But..."

"But they are not idiots. All their communications are encrypted, and we have not been able to track them despite following their trail for days. It is almost certainly a cipher they invented themselves."

"What have they done so far?"

"We concluded that this resistance was organized and worthy of our attention no more than a week ago. Since then they have raided a temporary base in Blois and some outposts in various parts of the territory. Before that, we recorded another couple of attacks that could easily be attributed to this resistance."

"Casualties?"

"In the dozens."

"Oh, shit..."

The Ahri let out a whistle of surprise and

admiration, and I nearly did the same. I had witnessed Amere's strength myself. For a civilian resistance group to have inflicted such damage... I felt nothing less than admiration.

"Right now there are at least five air patrols circling the Lyon district in search of hostile activity, in addition to many ground search teams. We want at least this portion of the territory to be safe for us and our activities. Allowing ourselves to be displaced by the enemy would be-"

"Bring all ground patrols back right now."

The Ahri's command made all of us in the room turn to look at him.

"...sir?"

"Just do what I said."

"... of course, right away."

Without asking why, the almost elderly

man gestured to one of the soldiers standing near him, who hurried out of the room.

"... sir, may I..."

"Where are you from?"

The man without insignia on his uniform made a confused expression. The Ahri, for his part, stood up, pulled a candy from his right pocket, and popped it into his mouth.

"Where were you born?"

Still trying to follow my boss's train of thought, the man whose shadow was cast over the map projection answered.

"Berlin, sir."

"Mhm. And you?"

The one being pointed at was one of the nearby soldiers.

"A-ah! R-Rome, sir."

"Of course. Alez."

Hearing my name felt as if ice-cold water had been thrown down my back.

"Where were you born?"

"I... Vienna."

"So... nobody here was born in Lyon. Did I forget to ask anyone?"

No one said a single word, silence reigned in the room for a few seconds.

"You... I do not remember your name."

"Rost, sir."

"Your first name, not your surname."

The man swallowed before continuing.

"Luther."

"Luther. I do not doubt the intelligence

work you must have done upon arriving here, nor the willingness of Ameretat soldiers to dedicate their entire lives to the cause, but there is something that does not sit right with me. We are not dealing with soldiers raised on the other side of the country and sent here to defend the territory, Luther. Your men out there will be met by men and women born and raised on this land. People who have spent their whole lives walking these fields, raised on the very same streets your soldiers patrol without any prior knowledge beyond what they saw on a map. The-"

"Sir!"

The Ahri's firm, calm, yet imposing voice was interrupted by a slammed door and the voice of the soldier who had earlier left the room. The soldier himself went pale upon realizing he had interrupted the Ahri, but the man I now called boss only smiled.

"Speak, soldier."

"Y-yes! Sir, we lost contact with two of the ground patrols near Annecy! There is no response at all!"

"Uh, how timely..."

The Ahri concluded, biting his candy while he flashed a smile at the same officer, who stood there open-mouthed, alternately staring at the agitated soldier and the map beside him.

"Review your strategy, Luther. I do not want any more unnecessary casualties."

"S-sir-"

"We must be more cautious. These are not just neighbors with a handful of weapons trying to defend what little they have left; they are an armed resistance willing to face us. Treat them with the same care you would give a conventional army... if not a little more. Is that clear?"

"... crystal clear, sir. Expect good news."

Perhaps seeing that the Ahri was not truly scolding him but effectively advising him for a better future strategy, Luther relaxed and said those words with noticeable conviction.

The Ahri nodded with that same smile still lingering on his face.

. . .

"What do you think, Alez?"

We were each assigned an individual room, and the Ahri visited mine before I had even finished arranging the few pieces of furniture to my liking; from what I had heard from the Ahri, we were going to be there for quite a few months.

"What do I think about what?

I said, leaning against the only window in the room to light a cigarette. Laurent managed to get good cigarettes, I do not

know from where.

"About what happened back there. If you ask me, I do not know whether overestimating the resistance could work against us. Maybe they really are just a handful of desperate civilians wanting to die for something, and giving them too much importance would make us waste resources we could allocate to some other, more... problematic areas."

"Why does it matter what I think?"

I could approach his question from many angles, but what caught my attention most was that he had come to me looking for an opinion.

"The boys in my personal guard are not there just to protect me, Alez. And are you not going to offer me a cigarette? To me, your boss?"

His casual, almost friendly tone was reassuring, but it disgusted me. We were

not friends. We would never be friends. I handed him a cigarette, and he tucked it into his pocket without so much as a grimace.

"Thanks, but I do not smoke."

I wanted to punch him. He was probably trying to be funny or... I do not know, I never fully understood that man.

"What else are we for?"

"To point out things I might be overlooking, of course. Everyone comes from different places, and that means everyone has different viewpoints and ideas, so from time to time I like to hear my boys' opinions..."

"I see..."

"So, tell me, what do you think?"

"Hm..."

The smoke rising from my lungs darkened my vision for a few moments.

"You are not overestimating them. According to the information that was circulating when I was still in the army, the French had the lowest desertion rate. In other words, it is rare to find a French stateless man out there. They exist, but they are a minority."

"Hm, interesting. What does that mean?"

"That those soldiers who were left lost battle after battle, and those who still wanted to keep fighting when the country fell, all of them must have ended up somewhere. It is not crazy to think that a good number of those in the resistance are ex-soldiers. Particularly in Lyon I saw with my own eyes many men who loved their country being left aside, lost in the fire. You are not overestimating them, but it is not right to treat them as a conventional army either."

Midway through my monologue, the Ahri discarded that air of carelessness he

always wore and let a trace of genuine surprise show on his face, like someone watching a runner go from last place to winning the race.

"Ah... How should I treat them?"

"You broke into a man's house to steal his things. You have companions, but the man is armed to the teeth and knows the house down to the last detail. How would you take him down?"

It took him about five seconds, but little by little the Ahri broke into a broad smile before clapping mockingly, taking short steps backward, nodding his head without taking his eyes off me.

"Wonderful. Truly, wonderful! I get it, I get it now. Thank you, Alez, I will leave you in peace. We will see each other at dinner, if you are hungry."

"Shit, it was right there and I did not see it..." he said as he walked away, closing the

door and leaving me alone in that room.

I looked down, and half my cigarette remained.

I looked out the window at the sky, and it could barely have been close to six in the afternoon.

I looked down at the platform of that airport turned military base, and saw a truck in which armed men climbed one after another, heading toward some point of death that escaped my knowledge.

I... I was already one of them too.

March 25, 2026, 12:40 a.m. 1 comments

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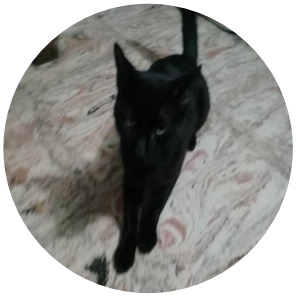

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A big fan of angels.

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P **Pepe Pepito** @pepe-pepito-733899 (/en/u/pepe-pepito-733899/)

i didn't plan on leaving a comment, truth be told when i read this earlier this year, it was an improvement from the last chapter, and really didn't need a comment
but given the recent news...
makes me sad knowing that there was more to go, there was so much to learn about this world you built, but its no longer going to be possible

QEPD brother, hope you have fair winds and calm weather up there

Reply comment 3 hours ago ♡ (/en/dashboard/story/comment/1028594/vote/up/)

~

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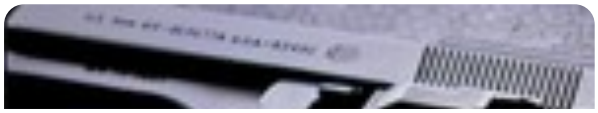

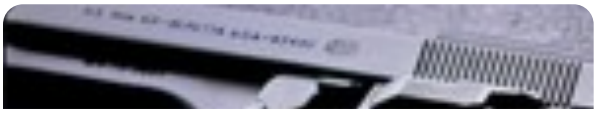

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